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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: POTUS VISITS, CAIRO SPEECH, GITMO,
TIANANMEN, EURO ELECTIONS, UK GOV CRISIS

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Editorials focused on the future of the Arcandor department store chain, the Tiananmen Square massacre 20 years ago, and a new health label for food. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute opened with a report on the search for debris of Air France Flight 447, while ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on the memorial service for the victims of AF 447.

- [12.](#) POTUS in Riyadh

Frankfurter Allgemeine editorialized: "The fact that the American President visits Saudi Arabia and Egypt makes clear that he is serious about his policy of reaching out to the Muslim world. Under his predecessor, Washington's reputation in the region was damaged seriously. Obama's meeting with Saudi King Abdullah, whose country is currently the lead nation of the Sunni Muslims, was important. However, a great deal more is expected in Arabia and elsewhere from his speech in Cairo. Obama has already struck a more conciliatory tone towards the Muslim world, although he himself lowered expectations. The conflicts in the region, which require U.S. engagement to be resolved, are so complex that quick solutions cannot be expected despite an improved sentiment. Obama will not change the minds of fanatics, such as Bin Laden."

Primetime ARD-TV's Tagesschau reported on the President's visit to Riyadh that "the Saudis are afraid of a stronger neighbor in Iran and that it might soon possess nuclear weapons. Barack Obama wants to exploit the position of the Saudis to stop the flow of financial assistance to extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. King Abdullah wants to revive a promising 2002 peace plan. On the margins of the talks, which were primarily of private nature, the American President emphasized the good strategic relations to Saudi Arabia."

13. Presidential Speech in Cairo

ZDF-TV's Heute-Journal reported on the President's upcoming speech in Cairo that "its main goal is to overcome the mistrust that has been built up between the Muslim world and the West for so many years. President Obama wants to open a door with his speech and offer a partnership. He will emphasize that the West is not at war with Islam." The report added that, although "one speech doesn't make a summer," there are "opportunities for improvements in the medium-term because many people in the region want this."

Under the headline "Obama is reaching out," mass tabloid Bild editorialized: "It is supposed to be an historic speech, an act of reconciliation. Obama will speak to the Muslim world in Cairo, to 1.2 billion Muslims.... America has never fought a war against Islam. Whenever Muslims suffered in recent decades, America came to help. Thousands of Americans have died for the freedom of Muslims. The Muslim world should actually reach out to America to express gratitude - not the other way around."

ZDF-TV's Washington correspondent Matthias Forno noted that he finds it "interesting" that "the speech will be immediately translated in 13 languages and be watchable over YouTube and Facebook in order to directly reach out to young Muslims in the world."

Tagesspiegel judged under the headline "He has no Time,": "expectations are running high. Many people in the Muslim world are expecting concrete statements in Cairo today. Obama will certainly use his personal biography and his charisma to emphasize the planned partnership with the Islamic and Arab world is credible. He will succeed. Fewer and fewer people in the Arab world listen to Osama bin Laden. Nevertheless, Obama could also disappoint if he does not present concrete proposals to resolve the Middle East conflict, and if he does not call for political liberalization in Egypt. Obama wants to win the hearts of the people, win support of the Arab regimes and form sound alliances with a view to the Middle East and Iran. This will be a difficult dichotomy and needs time. But Obama does not have this time. Without any visible initiatives, the next outbreak of violence is pre-programmed."

According to Handelsblatt, "we cannot take it amiss that Barack Obama thinks he knows how to cut the Gordian knot in the Middle East. He is new in his job and little experienced in foreign policy. That it why he has the right to pin his hopes on things common sense has demanded for a long time in this lasting conflict between Israel and the Palestinians: honesty. With sincerity, honesty and without any tricks, all sides involved should try to disentangle the conflict. But the Middle East would not have been this smoldering fire if things were really that simple. For the first time on his trip, he will get a small insight on what a long-cultivated distrust has done to the people in the region, because there is no trust between Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo and Riyadh."

Regional daily Flensburger Tageblatt had this to say: "When President Obama delivers his address in Cairo today, he will be walking a tightrope act. The feat for him must be to extend his hand to the 1.5 billion Muslims without slapping the Israeli ally in the face. Obama will concentrate on the necessary precondition for the success of any new initiative which aims at finding an accommodation between Israelis and Palestinians. The U.S. president will try to restore his country's position as an 'honest broker.'"

Regional daily Der Neue Tag of Weiden opined: "The omens are good, expectations high: Obama's father was a Muslim, he himself lived as a boy in Indonesia, the most populous Islamic country in the world. Despite all anti-American resentment in Asia, the U.S. president is considered extraordinarily popular. He could now strategically take advantage of this reputation in order to gain greater influence on the peace process in the Middle East. Today, the Arab world will listen closely whether and to what extent he will disassociate himself from the Israeli settlement policy."

Sueddeutsche's front-page report is headlined: "Obama Seeking Reconciliation with Muslims," and reported that "the highlight of his trip to the Middle East will be a speech in Cairo with which he

wants to renew America's relationship with the Muslim world. However, the President will not visit Israel." The paper added that, "following the eight-year presidency of George W. Bush and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, anti-Americanism and radical Islam are stronger than ever in the Arab and Islamic world. With a one-hour speech at Cairo University, Obama now wants to initiate change and seek reconciliation with the region."

Handelsblatt reported under the headline: "Dual Tightrope Act on the Nile," that "As a matter of fact, President Obama will break the political legacy of his predecessor George W. Bush in the Middle East. For instance, he avoided any contacts with Islamists who planned to implement a state based on Islamic principles. But the U.S. Embassy in Cairo has now sent out invitations to politicians who have close links to Egypt's largest opposition movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. That is why Obama's address is also a challenge for Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, who considers the Muslim Brotherhood his most dangerous opponents and is using violence against them." The paper cited the spokesman for the Muslim

Brotherhood, Essam Erian, as having said that "the Islamists do not want to hear only nice words from Obama but also want to see deeds, because the trip would otherwise be useless... The United States must completely withdraw from Iraq, stop the bombing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, help the Palestinians get their rights, and give up their support for the dictatorship of the Egyptian president."

14. POTUS Visit to Germany

Weekly Die Zeit argued in an editorial: "Barack Obama represents the new, the future: he incorporates the dream of shedding old skins, the dream of enlightenment and modern times. But this politician of today and tomorrow has now imposed on himself a crash course in history during his visit to Europe on Friday and on Saturday. Nationalism and communism, tyranny and liberation, war and victory and peace and all this in two days--is that not a bit too much? Seen from a global policy point of view, Europe is for Obama only a 'side theater.'" His most important item on the agenda during his trip is his speech in Cairo. It is almost unavoidable that Obama's policy of detente will create concerns and distrust in Israel. The visit to the memorial site in Buchenwald, may demonstrate that the United States and its new president have not forgotten the Nazi crimes, and that they are aware of the history of the Holocaust and the precarious existence of the Israeli state. Barack Obama does everything to disarm the conflicts of the present, and this is the important thing about his presidency: the return to reason and normalcy."

ZDF-TV's Heute-Journal showed German Government Spokesman Wilhelm saying that "the visit shows the interest in our country and the interest in close exchanges about important international topics." He added that Chancellor Merkel's relations with Obama are "good" and "cordial." A think tank commentator noted that the focus of Obama's visits is on the Muslim world and that "Washington is aware of the fact that Germany will not be able to make major contributions prior to the upcoming national elections." American Academy Director Gary Smith added that Obama wants to avoid the notion that he is interfering in the upcoming German elections.

Berliner Zeitung editorialized: "German foreign policy is suffering from the election campaigns between Chancellor Merkel and Foreign Minister Steinmeier. U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Saxony and Thuringia is also an election campaign appointment for top German politicians. The Chancellor will get the images at the side of Obama. Her challenger prefers not to participate in the talks because he wants to avoid photos that show him, according to the rules of the protocol, as part of Merkel's entourage, not as an independent candidate for the highest German office."

Frankfurter Allgemeine highlighted that "Obama's second visit to Germany as American President will again not take him to Berlin.... Some people believe this is a hidden political message by Washington."

Berliner Zeitung carried a page on President Obama's visit to Germany under the headline "Obama meets Merkel and annoys Steinmeier," noting that Steinmeier decided not to go to Dresden because he would have seen Obama only with a group of people. The

U.S. delegation had rejected the idea of a one-to-one conversation due to the rules of protocol.

15. Guantnamo Prisoners

Sueddeutsche Zeitung stated in an editorial: "The latest improvement of conditions at the prison does not change the fundamental dilemma that prevails between barbed wire and the watch towers: for more than seven years, the majority of prisoners have been behind bars without any prospect for a prosecutor who will finally put them on trial and charge them with concrete crimes. And there has been no hope for a judge who will acquit or sentence them. Prisoner number 78 was unable to tolerate this any longer and committed suicide. Many men in Camp Delta have been waiting for a long time for their release, because their home regimes are suspected of torture and neither the U.S, nor its hypocritical allies in the far away Europe want to give them a chance for a new life. But without a way out, even more prisoners will choose this way out."

16. Anniversary of Tiananmen Massacre

L|becker Nachrichten concluded: "On the anniversary of the student protests, there is no glimmer of hope. The events are a taboo. China's youth does not know anything about Tiananmen. A new revolt cannot be expected. It has turned out to be a great illusion that intensified trade with Beijing would initiate political change. Capitalist production and consumer fetishism primarily in the big cities were unable to shake the communist rule. Even the Olympic Games last year, which western sports functionaries praised in an irresponsible way as a turn towards liberalization, did not move anything."

In an editorial regional daily Rhein-Zeitung of Koblenz declared: "It is one of the most important questions in global history whether such a tough market economy that causes so many social distortions like the one in China can survive in the long run without democracy. The soul of a westerner would say 'no,' while the bitter experience of the Chinese says 'yes.' But if 1989 teaches us one thing, then it is that sometimes history takes a surprising course. We should do everything possible that China witnesses such a change as it happened in the GDR in 1989."

Regional daily Die Tagespost of W|rzburg noted: "Support for the oppressed church in China continues to be necessary. But it should also be in the interest of the international community of nations to urge the Chinese government to reassess the protest movements of 1989, release the student leaders who are still in prison and to call the responsible people for the massacre to account."

17. European Parliament Elections

Weekly Die Zeit said in a front-page editorial: "Never before has another order created so much wealth and freedom for 500 million people, no other union of states has had such a great attractiveness that other countries at any cost want to join it. But China and Russia put efficiency above democracy and have become important global players and compete with the EU because they are able to act faster and more recklessly. A high voter turnout would give Europe the right thing at the right moment that others do not have: legitimacy."

Regional Nordbayerischer Kurier of Bayreuth argued: "Hardly anyone knows the top candidates of the big parties. Why is the political Europe so far away? We do not want Brussels to tell us what we have to do, and, in this respect, the EU frequently lacks the necessary sensitivity. Only a few people have any idea of how the complex structure of the EU with the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Parliament works. On Sunday, when we go to the polls, we will find ballots with many strange names. But Europe, the unknown country, needs well-known faces. Then the people would turn to it."

Tabloid Express of Cologne observed: "An opinion poll revealed that only a few Germans know the German candidates who will run in elections on Sunday. Is this a boring election? Unfortunately, the interest in the elections seems to be minor. Almost 500 million people live in the euro zone, a vast union with a great

attractiveness and by far more than a simple economic area. The European Union stands for democracy and freedom. Politicians, who laud Europe but continue to stick to national mindsets, are not the only ones who must be blamed for the fact that it has so little influence as a union of nations. We, too, are called upon [to change this]. A high voter turnout would strengthen Europe more than all the nice soapbox speeches."

Schwdbische Zeitung of Leutkirch pointed out: "It is up to the people to choose those who represent them [in the European parliament, EP]. And the higher the voter turnout, the greater will be the moral weight of the European Parliament. If the Lisbon Treaty finally came into force, the EP would make a big step forward with respect to its influence. That is why every citizen, who does not go to the polls forfeits a chance to decide about his personal circumstances surrounding his or her life."

18. UK Government Crisis

Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "The opposition in the Lower House of Parliament is smelling blood and is calling for new elections. This is only logical given the Brown government's loss of authority and involvement of leading Labor politicians in the expense scandal.

Brown's resistance to call new elections is also logical because he and Labor are with their backs to the wall. However, if the European and local elections turn out as the predictions say, if they are a disaster, then a reshuffle of the cabinet will not suffice to rescue Brown. The days of the Prime Minister, who is turning ever more into a tragic figure of British politics, might indeed be numbered... In the current crisis, Britain needs a government that can lead and does not languish."

Die Welt noted that "Gordon Brown is experiences a serious crisis" and "Britain is seeing one of the most precarious phases in its history." The editorial added: "The island is suffering from the weakest governments in a long time, and it will be taught a proper lesson in today's European and local elections.... Early elections might be the only way out [of the crisis.] Soon, the Prime Minister will not be able to avoid them."

A Frankfurter Rundschau editorial headlined "Facing the Collapse" remarked: "These are dramatic days in London. The government of the Labor Prime Minister is beginning to collapse. Two top ministers have resigned within two days.... The embarrassing reports on self-enrichment of British parliamentarians have caused a giant quake that made the foundation of the government unstable."

Regional daily Braunschweiger Zeitung noted: "Members of all parties in the House of Commons have enriched themselves at the expense of the taxpayer. But now the time has come to settle political accounts. And the worst thing for Prime Minister Gordon Brown is that the British are called upon this Wednesday to vote for their representatives for the European Parliament. This could become a black day for Labor. It seems that the banking crisis and the shameless behavior of some managers have a political parallel in England. It does not matter that the sums involved are very small. The moral depravity and the brazen unscrupulousness are the things that are so disgusting."

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